

Message Text

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P 250930Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 925

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 FREETOWN 0573

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SL, KS, KN

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT STEVENS' EXPLANATION OF FONMIN LUKE'S
RESIGNATION AND STATUS SL-ROK RELATIONS

SUMMARY:

IN PRIVATE SESSION TO WHICH HE SUMMONED ME MARCH 22, PRESIDENT STEVENS GAVE ME HIS ACCOUNT OF INTERNAL GOSL QUARREL OVER ACCEPTANCE RESIDENT ROK AMBASSADOR WHICH HAS LED TO POSTPONEMENT PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS AND RESIGNATION OF FONMIN LUKE. STEVENS REAFFIRMED BOTH HIS PERSONAL AND GOSL COMMITMENT TO RECEIVING ROK AMBASSADOR "AT APPROPRIATE TIME", BUT DROPPED INTO CONVERSATION BROAD HINT THAT OFFER OF AID TO REPLACE WHAT NORTH KOREANS AND POSSIBLY CHINESE MIGHT WITHDRAW IN RETALIATION COULD HELP RESOLVE WHAT HE TERMED HIS "DILEMMA".

1. PRESIDENT STEVENS SUMMONED ME TO HIS OFFICE MORNING MARCH 22 FOR STATED PURPOSE INFORMING ME OF FONMIN LUKE'S RESIGNATION AND BACKGROUND TO IT. TO MY ALMOST CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE, I WAS ONLY MEMBER OF
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DIPLOMATIC CORPS SO SUMMONED.

2. STEVENS CONFIRMED REFTTEL THAT BACKGROUND OF RESIGNATION WAS "DILEMMA" HE AND GOSL FACED ON ISSUE OF ACCREDITATION RESIDENT ROK AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE LEE CHUN SOUNG FOR WHOM AGREEMENT PREVIOUSLY GRANTED AND WHO HAS NOW BEEN IN FREETOWN ABOUT THREE WEEKS. STEVENS SAID GOSL HAD BEEN HAVING "INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES" OVER ISSUE DURING PAST SEVERAL DAYS AND HE WANTED ME, AS REPRESENTATIVE OF COUNTRY WHICH HAD SHOWN INTEREST IN THIS QUESTION IN PAST, TO HEAR HIS SIDE OF STORY BEFORE RUMORS BEGAN FLYING SO THAT I COULD REPORT THE TRUTH BACK TO MY GOVERNMENT.

3. STEVENS SAID GOSL HAD HAD DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ROK SINCE 1962, WITH ROK AMBASSADOR ALWAYS RESIDENT OUTSIDE SL. MORE RECENTLY, HE SAID, "THE OTHER KOREA" HAS COME TO SL, OFFERING SEVERAL YEARS AGO TO BUILD LONG-DESIRED FREETOWN TOWN HALL FOR WHICH GOSL HAD NEVER BEEN ABLE FIND EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE. CONSTRUCTION OF TOWN HALL NOW WELL ALONG. (COMMENT: IN AUGUST 1974, AFTER SEVERAL YEARS BEING REPRESENTED BY NON-RESIDENT AMBASSADOR IN CONAKRY, NK OPENED RESIDENT EMBASSY UNDER CHARGE D'AFFAIRES.) IN FALL 1974, STEVENS SAID, ROK HAD APPROACHED GOSL REQUESTING AGREEMENT FOR NEW RESIDENT AMBASSADOR. STEVENS SAID THERE HAD BEEN SERIOUS OPPOSITION WITHIN GOSL TO REQUEST, PARTICULARLY WITHIN ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC) CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND FROM SOME CABINET MEMBERS WITH WHOM NK EMBASSY RESPS HAD PARTICULARLY CLOSE RELATIONS. NONETHELESS, BELIEVING THAT ANY STATE WITH WHOM GOSL HAD HAD FRIENDLY RELATIONS FOR SO LONG SHOULD BE ALLOWED HAVE RESIDENT AMBASSADOR IF IT DESIRED, STEVENS SAID HE HAD PERSUADED ALL ELEMENTS TO ACCEPT HIS VIEW AND CABINET HAD KNOWINGLY APPROVED REQUEST. (COMMENT: ACCOUNT VARIES FROM EARLIER FONOFF REPORT IN FREETOWN 2457, DECEMBER 13, 1974, THAT AGREEMENT GRANTED BY MISTAKE, BUT STEVENS' STATEMENT OF ASSUMPTION PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CABINET DECISION UNDER CONDITIONS OF FULL AWARENESS OBVIOUSLY STRENGTHENS ROK TACTICAL POSITION.)

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4. STEVENS SAID MATTER RESTED THERE AS FAR AS HE CONCERNED UNTIL MARCH 20 WHEN AMB-DESIGNATE LEE SCHEDULED PRESENT CREDENTIALS. WHEN LEE HAD ALREADY BEEN CEREMONIALLY RECEIVED AT STATE HOUSE AND WAITING FOR PRESENTATION CEREMONY, ENTIRE ISSUE RAISED AGAIN, (COMMENT: REPORTEDLY PRINCIPALLY BY VP/PRIMIN KOROMA ASSISTED BY SEVERAL CABINET MEMBERS) ON GROUNDS 1. NK LIKELY REACT IRRATIONALLY AND POSSIBLY WITHDRAW AID AND

2. UNKNOWN EFFECT WHICH FULL ACCREDITATION ROK
AMBASSADOR MIGHT HAVE ON MUCH LARGER ASSISTANCE FROM
PRC WHOSE REPS, STEVENS SAID, HAD RECENTLY FREQUENTLY
INSERTED STATEMENT OF CONCERN INTO EVEN TECHNICAL AID
DISCUSSIONS. STEVENS SAID THAT, WHILE ANGRY AT LAST
MINUTE OBJECTIONS, COLLAPSE OF CONSENSUS MADE IT CLEAR
TO HIM CREDENTIALS COULD NOT BE RECEIVED THAT DAY AND
FONMIN LUKE WAS INSTRUCTED INFORM LEE, WHO HAD NOW
WAITED HOUR AND HALF, THAT THIS NOT A CONVENIENT TIME
FOR PRESIDENT TO RECEIVE HIM. STEVENS SAID STORMY DIS-
CUSSION HAD ENSUED, CONTINUING INTO SPECIAL PARTIAL
CABINET MEETING MARCH 21, AND THAT SEVERAL TIMES IN
ARGUMENT LUKE HAD DISPLAYED INSULTING MANNER, EVEN
TOWARD PRESIDENT HIMSELF. ACCORDING STEVENS, LUKE
THOUGHT GOSL BEHAVIOR UNBECOMING AND THAT HE AND HIS
MINISTRY BEING PLACED IN UNTENABLE, EMBARRASSING POSI-
TION. STEVENS, THOUGH IN SYMPATHY WITH LUKE'S POSITION,
WAS ANGRY AT HIS MANNER AND CONCERNED BY HIS INABILITY
PERCEIVE SENSITIVITY OF "DILEMMA." WHEN LUKE HANDED
STEVENS WRITTEN RESIGNATION, PRESIDENT ACCEPTED IT.

5. STEVENS COMMENTED AT LENGTH ON HIS RELATIONSHIP
WITH LUKE, WHO HAD BEEN HIS PERSONAL PROTEGE, AND
WITH LUKE'S FATHER, WHOM STEVENS HAD PERSONALLY ASSURED
LUKE'S ELECTION TO PARLIAMENT AND HAND-PICKED HIM AS

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L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FONMIN, THERE HAD BEEN PROBLEMS EVER SINCE. BEYOND DISTURBING PERSONAL TRAITS (LIQUOR, GAMBLING, WOMEN), LUKE WHO FROM WEALTHY CREOLE FAMILY HAD BEEN PATRONIZING AND INSULTING TOWARD CABINET COLLEAGUES (COMMENT: MOST OF WHOM FROM MUCH LESS SOPHISTICATED UPCOUNTRY TRIBAL GROUPS). HIS BEHAVIOR IN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES HAD OFTEN EMBARRASSED GOSL. PRESIDENT SPECIFICALLY CITED A RECENT PROVOCATION OF ARABS AND LUKE ROLE IN OAU CRITICISM OF AMBASSADOR DAVIS' NOMINATION. REGARDING DAVIS' NOMINATION, STEVENS SAID GOSL EMBARRASSED BOTH BY LUKE'S PROMINENT ROLE AND WIDESPREAD BAD PUBLICITY FOR SL OVER MATTER OF BASICALLY LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO GOSL. HE SAID GOSL HAD GIVEN LUKE NO INSTRUCTIONS ON ISSUE AND THAT GENERAL GOSL BEHAVIOR IN INTERNATIONAL ARENA WAS INTENDED TO BE LOW PROFILE. WHILE REGRETFUL FOR PERSONAL REASONS, STEVENS SAID HE THOUGHT LUKE RESIGNATION DEFINITELY IN BEST INTERESTS OF GOSL.

6. I THANKED PRESIDENT FOR COURTESY AND CONFIDENCE SHOWN ME IN CALLING ME FOR THIS FRANK DISCUSSION, NOTING THAT WHILE USG HAS LONG SUPPORTED ROK, EMBASSY HAD NOT BEEN AT ALL INVOLVED IN THIS ISSUE RECENTLY, BEING CONVINCED THAT ROK AS SOVEREIGN STATE IS FULLY CAPABLE OF REPRESENTING ITSELF. WHILE APPRECIATING "DILEMMA" WHICH GOSL AND PRESIDENT PERSONALLY FACIN, DECISION AN CONFIDENTIAL

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INTERNAL GOSL MATTER AND GOSL DECISION ALLOW RESIDENT AMBASSADORS FROM BOTH KOREAN STATES APPEARED INDICATION OF NON-ALIGNED NATURE OF GOSL INTERNATIONAL POSITION AS WELL AS DESIRE MAXIMIZE EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE. WHEN I QUESTIONED, HOWEVER, HOW "OTHER KOREA' COULD RENEGE ON TOWN HALL COMMITMENT AFTER CONSTANT PUBLI-CITY, STEVENS REPLIED THAT I OBVIOUSLY DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE IRRATIONAL NATURE OF THE NK REPRESENTATIVES, THREE OF WHOM HAD EVEN STOOD OUTSIDE STATE HOUSE AT TIME SCHEDULED FOR PRESENTATION CEREMONY. STEVENS ASSERTED NK REPS FULLY CAPABLE OF PACKING UP AND WALKING OUT, LEAVING PROJECT UNFINISHED. STEVENS THEN SAID ALL THAT GOSL REALLY WANTED WAS THE TOWN HALL AND IT UNFORTUNATE THAT ROK HAD NOT COME FORWARD WITH OFFER OF SOME LARGE PROJECT WHICH COULD BE USED AS TOOL IN THEIR SUPPORT.

7. I ASKED WHETHER STEVENS NOW INTENDED FOR GOSL TO GO BACK ON ITS COMMITMENT TO ROK. STEVENS STATEE EMPHATICALLY THAT GOSL HAD MADE COMMITMENT AND WOULD STAND BY IT. ROK REPS FREE MOVE ABOUT TOWN AND RENT HOUSES AND OFFICE. AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME BUT WITHOUT NORMAL PUBLICITY, STEVENS WOULD RECEIVE NEW AMBASSADOR. STEVENS

SAID IN MEANTIME HE, NOT BEING DICTATORIAL BY NATURE, WOULD REBUILD ORIGINAL CONSENSUS THROUGH PERSUASION AND INFORMAL TALKS WITH THOSE OPPOSED TO HIS VIEWS. CONCURRENCE OF APC CENTRAL COMMITTEE WAS IMPORTANT IN THIS REGARD. UNFORTUNATELY, APC SEC GEN (AND FINMIN) KAMARA-TAYLOR HAD BEEN OUT OF COUNTRY AND HIS RETURN (THIS COMING WEEK) WOULD BE NECESSARY BEFORE STEPS COULD BE TAKEN TO REBUILD CONSENSUS AND RESOLVE DILEMMA. (COMMENT: KAMARA-TAYLOR IS COINCIDENTALLY HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF LOCAL SLD-PRK FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY BUT EMBASSY'S IMPRESSION IS THAT BASICALLY MODERATE FINMIN PROBABLY ACCEPTED POSITION AS PROTECTIVE COLORING AGAINST CRITICISM FROM MORE RADICAL COLLEAGUES, AND STEVENS IMPLIED HE FULLY EXPECTED KAMARA-TAYLOR TO BE ALLY IN HIS UPCOMING EFFORT.)

8. COMMENT: STEVENS' CONSTANT REFERENCES TO HIS "DILEMMA" STRONGLY SUGGEST HIS PURPOSE IN SUMMONING ME NOT JUST TO INFORM ME OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS BUT
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ALSO TO DANGLE BAIT FOR ADDITIONAL FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, PROBABLY PRINCIPALLY FROM ROK BUT PERHAPS ALSO FROM USG. IF ROK CAPABLE OF QUIETLY EXTENDING SOME OFFER IN PRINCIPLE OF ASSISTANCE TO GOSL, THIS COULD GREATLY ASSIST IN UNDERCUTTING POSITION OF THOSE WITHIN GOSL OPPOSED TO RECEIVING AMB-DESIGNATE. AT SAME TIME, WHILE PRESENT SITUATION OBVIOUSLY A DEEP EMBARRASSMENT TO ROK, EMBASSY BELIEVES ROK IN BASICALLY STRONG POSITION IF IT WILLING PLAY HAND COOLLY AND LET SITUATION SORT ITSELF OUT. STEVENS OBVIOUSLY IRRITATED AT HEAVY-HANDED POLITICIZED PRESSURES FROM NK AND PRC REPS. STEVENS' EMPHATIC COMMITMENT TO RECEIVING ROK REP, ALTHOUGH AT UNSPECIFIED DATE, NONETHELESS A STRONG CARD AND WOULD APPEAR MAKE IT VERY UNLIKELY GOSL MIGHT IN END RENEGE ON COMMITMENT. GENERALIZED OR, EVEN MORE PREFEREABLY, A SPECIFIC QUIET ROK OFFER OF ASSISTANCE, POSSIBLY EXPRESSING WILLINGNESS COMPLETE TOWN HALL IF NI WITHDRAWS, WOULD NONETHELESS STRENGTHEN HAND MORE, IF THIS POSSIBLE.

9. SUNDAY, MARCH 23 I RECEIVED REQUEST FROM ROK AMB-DESIGNATE LEE TO COME TALK TO ME AND I TALKED TO HIM AT HOME MONDAY, MARCH 24. CONVERSATION FOLLOWS
SEPTTEL.

10. FULLER MEMCON OF CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT BEING POUCHED AF/W, EA/K AND EMBASSY SEOUL MARCH 25.
SAMUELS

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